International Scientific Conference

Conference on the Status of Teacher(s) and Conditions for Teaching:

Facts, issues and challenges.

Université Lumière LYON 2

8, 9, 10 January 2015

Gist:

This international symposium on education is intended for the community of researchers in educational institutions encompassed by a broad range of research interests: historians, sociologists, educational specialists and teachers, philosophers, comparative analysts, etc.

Closely examined in France in recent decades, both by researchers and by administrative and political managers, or through surveys contracted to polling institutions, the status of teacher(s) has been the subject of studies and reports that have provided an overview of the profession in terms of changes in professional identity and the problems of societal recognition encountered by teachers worldwide. The well-enshrined expression “teacher’s status” constitutes a useful shortcut that one cannot entirely do without, but which should preferably be used in the plural, given how diverse teaching categories and circumstances are, despite the existence of a common core. This is all the more the case since this professional sector has never been so diverse in terms of status and training, and since it now has to co-operate with an ever-increasing variety of professionals. Use of the plural is also necessary at the level of international comparison, such as in the OECD publication Education at a Glance, which provides access to comparisons in statistical terms. Making specific reference to this plural use, the symposium will focus primarily on broad-scale approaches and those offering a comparative view, both intra-nationally (a view of one teaching category highlighted relative to another) and inter-nationally. What can we learn from analyses of teachers’ status that are at a remove from what we experience ourselves?
Historians may home in on teachers’ status in the 19th and 20th centuries. They would do well not to overlook the importance of reports and studies such as those mentioned above. Sociologists may bring to the table contemporary teachers’ working conditions, based on a range of problems (the gender problem, the “new teachers” problem, the problem of the impacts of new forms of governance, etc.).

Also under consideration here are teaching conditions, seen from a didactic and pedagogical perspective, as well as in a more general philosophical sense (Blais, Gauchet, Ottavi, 2008). This is because teachers’ status, juxtaposed with teaching conditions, now arises inevitably as a new societal issue, both in the context of a generalised “pedagogisation” of our society (Bernstein, 2001, Tyler, 2004) and in that of a lowered recognition of scholastic achievement and teaching practices, and of concerns over learning techniques. What has been called the “form of teaching” (“forme scolaire”) by some social historians merits re-examination. Are we witnesses to a dwindling of this notion and its future replacement by other “forms”? Post-modern authors have maintained that “The old principle whereby the acquisition of knowledge necessarily involves shaping the mind (Bildung), and even the person, is becoming obsolete and will become more and more so.” (Lyotard)

And we would be remiss to overlook the concerns raised by the digital revolution and the growth of e-learning and open learning.

Under what conditions might teachers’ status avoid leading to the abandonment of teaching as an institution due to competition from other cultural influences? How do teachers deal with new issues of cultural diversity and with special educational needs, or with lay models being called into question? How do they go about shouldering the tasks of assessing and standardising skills demanded by changes of course in public education systems? What type of impact may new technologies have on any eventual change in the “form of teaching” and to what extent? These are all key questions, and the list goes on, that teachers and educational specialists can address (seeking to make their answers as generally applicable as possible).

What conditions to be able to teach, in the fundamental sense of the word, now seem to be a prerequisite for the future of one or several new teacher’s/teachers’ status? How do new priorities given to basic principles (the purpose of schooling, of knowledge, etc.) and network-based operations that are more horizontal, affect the notions of equality, the expressions of equitable schooling and the critical faculties of teachers? What imperatives and which principles not rooted in the past, but truly in touch with the modern world, should be brought into play? Along with researchers from other fields, philosophers will also be asked to contribute to this discussion.
The conference will be divided into various symposiums.

The conference will take place on 8, 9, 10 January 2015.

There will be:

- symposiums set up by conference organisers based on individual proposals for talks, involving the subjects suggested below (S1 - S10). There may be more than one of these symposiums, depending on the number and focus of the proposals received.

- pre-defined symposiums proposed for presentations by a panel dealing with the same subjects S1 - S10 (1 moderator, with 5 participants as a minimum and 8 maximum).

Opening conference on Tuesday 8th a.m : Claude LESSARD

Conference on Friday 9th p.m : Philippe MEIRIEU

Conference interdisciplinary conclusions on Saturday 10th a.m.


List of symposiums:

S1: The teaching profession over time: career paths, beginnings and endings............. p. 5

S2: Changes in teaching conditions ................................................................................................................ p. 6
S3: Do we hear a “death knoll for the time of teachers” in this era of digital technology and seeing “withering” of our form of teaching? p. 6

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S7: The specific nature of teaching conditions at the university level p. 9

S8: Role definition for teachers in the creative realms p. 10

S9: Teaching conditions and forms of involvement p. 10

S10: Teaching conditions in a context of diversity and inequality p. 11

Languages allowed: French and English.

Proposals should be sent to the organisers at the following e-mail addresses:

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marina.randriamiarisoa@univ-lyon2.fr

They should contain a title and 5 key words, and be in the form of an abstract no more than 200-250 words in length.

Deadline: 30 May 2014.

Conference registration fees: Participants - € 200 before 30 September; € 250 after this date. Students - € 100.

NB: The scientific committee will define the form of a scientific publication resulting from the symposium.

Selected papers from PHD students will take place on a special issue of the young researchers online.
Symposiums:

S1: The teaching profession over time: career paths, beginnings and endings

Within the last few decades, due to the effect of changes in the structure of the educational system and its coordinating entities, associated with recent economic transformations and societal needs, the teaching profession (at primary, secondary, and even university levels - see Symposium no. 7) has become especially vulnerable. In general, the requirements for professional training have increased for teachers, specifically for new teachers. As a result, the latest changes in initial teacher training and education (the “master’s degree requirement” in 2010, then the creation in 2013 of the ESPEs [new teacher training institutes]) seek to promote enhanced levels of competence. Meanwhile, time-in-service grows longer whereas in-service training for teachers has substantially decreased. The social/labour and professional issues at the beginning and end of one's career are handled in various ways: a certain priority is given to new teachers with the double concern of preventing people from quitting while getting them to quickly adopt the new standards of teaching. For those nearing the
end of their careers, the issues have been dealt with quite little, and the institution itself has underestimated their importance, even as they question the role of experience (and passing it on), the role of career development, the importance of maintaining effectiveness, and how to preserve good health in the workplace.

Those issues concerning the work, the sector and professional qualifications of teachers constitute the core of the discussions of this symposium. Professional qualifications, understood to mean a system of standards and values historically established and implemented in the sector, will be examined in terms of their substance in time, at different periods in the career. How do new teachers establish their professional qualifications and persona during their initial years on the job? How do experienced teachers, during and at the end of their careers, keep their chins up at work? What role does the career advancement of teachers play?

What rites of passage and what resources mould and shape teachers throughout their careers? What are the standardisations and re-standardisations in their work at the various levels of education and based on the various places where they work? According to which configurations and re-configurations for the individuals, the groups and the work environments? What are the consequences of that for the field itself? Questions about methods could also be the subject of proposals: how to apprehend career paths, adjustments made to the sector over time, changes throughout the professional grouping, by following a sociology of professional groups that attends to the sector itself.

An examination of the various studies on teachers’ work (from nursery school to the university), from the start of one’s career until retirement, will also seek to elucidate the status of teachers today. Comparisons between countries will also be welcome. Proposals for presentations should present the results of empirical studies or reviews of the literature.

**S2: Changes in teaching conditions**

The current status of teachers in society is the result of a history that evolved throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. What vision has that history passed on to us? How have the statuses of teachers changed during that period of time? What types of recognition have gradually emerged and how are they borne out by political, union and pedagogical thinking that is often contradictory? It will be worthwhile to focus especially on the differences in teaching conditions that can be seen at the primary, secondary and university levels. How did differences related to training and to the modalities of entry into the profession shape those teaching conditions? To what extent have efforts to equalise status made in France since the law of 1989 had an effect on the modalities of recognition and on working conditions?
Beyond these historical or socio-historical approaches, it will be important to consider more contemporary problems, especially by giving attention to the image of teaching conditions as currently discussed in the fields of sociology or social psychology. The notions of identity for oneself, of identity for others, the interactions between teaching categories, as well as the problems related to the mandate, the status, the recognition and the set of elements that are involved in what sociological approaches have deemed the “process of professionalization”, will be among the problems discussed in this symposium.

Comparisons at the European and international levels may also give rise to approaches that enable one to assess convergence or divergences in the course of change.

Original surveys, secondary analyses of reports and polls (of which there have been many in France for several decades now) will specifically enable us to contribute to designing an objectivised image of teaching conditions, viewed by category, on the national level and/or in an intra- and international perspective.

S3: Do we hear a “death knoll for the time of teachers” in this era of digital technology and seeing a “withering” of our form of teaching?

Are we currently witnessing a withering of the “form of teaching” and thus sounding “the death knoll for the time of teachers”? (J.-F. Lyotard) What alternative(s) can be envisioned or are already in gestation? By what sort of renewal of practices and scholastic culture? By promoting digital culture, through the presence of arts in schools, or by other means? Doesn’t pushing open and e-learning mean abandoning too hastily the patience that led to the slow elaboration of scholastic institutions? Are knowledge and education public property? Does the nomadic nature of knowledge have to give way to the illusion of the horn of plenty? To its pillaging? What are the safeguards? Or, on the contrary, what sort of rebirth?

Can one come up with a realistic projection, for example by revisiting the thinking of Ivan Illich on a different basis? Will Europe as a nation cause the figure of a European teacher to arise? On what conditions? What will be the benefits of that? The risks? What currently are the premises (European programmes, etc.)?

What resources are there for special education? Does the act of categorising children with special or specific educational needs, children now renamed as “dysfunctional” in this or that sense, mean the end of the job of teaching, and the ushering in of a teacher as therapist? What is the new direction of the work of a teacher for those groups? What public policy instruments currently allow us to envision
those changes?

Likewise, for those populations marginalised by economic infra-nomadism, what are the new incarnations of the teaching profession (pluri-, multi- or interculturism) for migrant populations? Furthermore, what effects do migratory movements have on education? Can open access be seen as a way of the future? On what conditions?

S4: Knowledge, means, teaching work and status of teachers

The changes in knowledge bases and how they are broken down for the purposes of learning, and the modifications in the modalities of their transmission, lead us to wonder about the very notion of a teaching programme, on one hand, and the role of sociotechnical means in learning and in teachers’ work, on the other. A couple of phenomena illustrate these changes:

* the emergence of various sorts of “education for”, that emphasize the interpenetration of values and knowledge bases into what needs to be taught, and into the institutional perspective on making teachers educators;
* the effect of resources available on-line (institutional or not) about the content taught, about the modalities of teaching and teachers’ work;
* the new means instituted or “cooked up” on a daily basis, likely to combine entities that are diverse by nature (knowledge bases, technical objects, various professionals, students and potentially parents): personalised assistance, support, efforts to combat school-leaving, for example.

The articulation of knowledge bases and their selection criteria are being re-called into question in France by the emergence at the decision-making levels of a notion of “curriculum” not overlapping with that of “programme” (see the tasks allocated to the future Senior Council on Programmes). It is associated with the skills-based approach, no longer merely as an interpretive framework mobilised by sociologists or educational specialists, but as a normative proposal. Likewise, digital culture, upsetting the teaching-learning balance, calls into question the specificity of knowledge bases and scholastic means.

These transformations have many consequences for the work and professionalism of teachers, and again raise two questions: Producing learning: how and what? How is the role of teachers redefined by these changes?

The value of pluridisciplinary approaches in dealing with these questions reveals the idea of a convergence between didactics and sociology, and more specifically, for a renewed understanding of
the role of teaching and what it is based on: knowledge bases and learning. Proposals stemming from educational specialists, curriculum sociologists and specialists in sociotechnical systems are invited.

**S5: Conditions enabling one to teach and educate**

After the eras of pedagogy and didactics, will philosophy be next? This proclaimed “return” of a philosophy of education, in education, of questionings concerning what has been called in Quebec “the fundamentals” might seem presumptuous. Is philosophy’s share in the sciences of education and educational policies not continuously decreasing? Is this not the time of “sciences of learning”? Clearly, but at the same time, the hot questions in education have shifted from questioning the conditions for teaching and educating to questions about the conditions that make it possible to teach and educate. This symposium aims to bring together and discuss works concerning the problematic foundations of contemporary education. Works in philosophy, as well as in contemporary history, sociology, anthropology, etc., dealing with the mutations and transformations that affect, under such conditions of possibility, the very enterprise of teaching and educating. Broad changes concerning childhood, of which it has been said that it was the “true problem” of education: how to start anew in thinking about the conditions for teaching and educating a “new” childhood? Broad changes concerning the nature and epistemology of knowledge: taking into account the post-modern explosion of the encyclopaedia and/or recomposing the sense of knowledge? Broad changes in the order of the educational relationship: if it is not enough to deplore the loss of authority, nor to plead to have it restored, what about the possibilities and conditions of its reinvention?

**S6: Teachers and new forms of governance**

Teachers do their jobs in an educational structure that, in some aspects, no longer corresponds to that of the 1970’s. School is no longer entirely an institution, nor is there the same bureaucracy. The critique developed by New Public Management has shifted French schools toward decentralisation with the acknowledgement of regional and local administrations, of a broader environment that designates partnerships and of a search for efficiency based on instruments of assessment. For teachers, this new governance means a new professional context that imposes new constraints and relationships, demanding new skills but generally offering a different kind of resources.

The modernisation of schooling has especially placed the school at the focal point as the unit by which scholastic progress must be achieved, as compared to the classroom, a teacher’s more sheltered space. As a result, heads of establishments have been given new responsibilities. The field
of pedagogy, which constitutes the core element of schools, is no longer the exclusive purview of teachers and inspectors: principals and directors are in charge of regulating it through the use of various instruments (pedagogical councils, national assessments, IPES, etc.) and of mobilising the teaching staff. In other words, pedagogy is placed under the control of a local hierarchical authority and of collegial professionalism.

Furthermore, to be a teacher has more and more come to mean working in an open structure, in the sense that it sets up multiple relationships with associations, local and regional agencies, satellite entities of the justice system, etc. A teacher’s work is directly or indirectly related to a networking structure. Several types of teaching are now carried out in the form of collaboration with external agents in the fields of art and culture, sports, etc.

Finally, the development of policies on assessment also continues to change the professional context and the means of control of the job of teaching. Pedagogical assessments are now brought in to articulate their work and guide their jobs (national assessments, common base, etc.), and other types of evaluations measure establishments’ performance in a quantitative manner to which they seem to adhere little. Local and regional entities also take part in assessments of their educational activities.

This symposium may specifically raise the question of whether this new governance, through a set of transformations and mechanisms to be described, has not reduced professional autonomy and changed the identity of teachers.

S7: The specific nature of teaching conditions at the university level

The status of teachers at the level of higher education raises special questions because most of the teachers do both teaching and research. In addition, French higher education, characterised by the double tracks of “grandes écoles” [national institutes of higher education] and universities, has been, as of some fifteen years ago, vastly remodelled by a large number of supra-national (Bologna process) or national reforms (laws concerning the structuring of teaching and research, the Investments in the Future plan). Lastly, universities have become institutions of general admission that take in more and more students with diverse profiles whose success is not assured.

In this context, a certain number of questions suggest themselves for discussion:

How has work changed for teachers who do research? What changes in identity have accompanied that? How are the links between the various aspects of their work rearranged (research, teaching and students’ future employment)?

How have the construction of Europe-wide coordination in higher education and national policies on higher education affected teachers’ status at this level?
What factors, especially institutional, encourage teachers who do research to invest in teaching itself and the development of pedagogical innovation? What does pedagogical training mean for teachers in higher education?

How are teaching practices changing, especially under the effect of digital technology?

How can teachers in higher education promote the transition between secondary and higher education and enhance the development of students’ autonomy?

In more general terms, how can we delimit the work of teachers who do research in relation to their more diversified and more complex tasks and missions (professional training and intellectual development of students, adaptation to greater diversity in student populations, modalities of assessment of research and teaching, etc.)?

S8: Role definition for teachers in the creative realms

After long having been confined to the status of subjective observer and product of the imagination, the realm of literature and the arts is being given more attention in the human and social sciences. Historians, sociologists and philosophers, in particular, are finding there not only a documentary resource for their writings, but also forms of thought likely to add to that work. Undertakings in education have not been left behind, and there is growing recourse to literary and artistic fields to take up subjects and questions for research in education. How do the various forms of artistic expression today (literature, plays, cinema, films for television, comic books, etc.) depict today’s education? How do they depict today’s children, students and teachers? How do they deal with teachers’ status and its avatars? In addition, re-examination of artistic education as a potential part of general schooling favours greater inclusion of art and artists in the schools. What effects does this have at school? How do teachers make use of this, or not? This symposium aims to focus on the intersections of these two potential means of analysis of the place of aesthetics in education.

S9: Teaching conditions and forms of involvement

Long gone are the times when an observer of the “world of school teachers” could make the following comment: “A proper school teacher has the duty to be a union member”, the times when one could speak in France of the National Teachers Federation (FEN) as the “teachers’ bulwark” and of teachers as a professional sector very predominantly unionised. Even if the expression “over-unionised” still applies to teachers to some degree, this is only very relative compared to the other salaried sectors (8-10% on average in the public sector and less than 5% in the private sector) and the decline of unions is also affecting the teaching sector. How is this decline present in France?
Discussions could focus, among other things, on the question of percentages of union membership. What is the situation in other countries, both European and non-European (e.g. in South America, where unions facing problems seem to be finding more members among teachers)? We might also look at how unions react to hard times, seek to update their practices (in relation to strikes, for example) and invent new means of action.

Does this crisis under way in unions mean a withdrawal from all types of involvement with society, or are new ways to express such involvement being found (dwindling involvement or the emergence of new forms in new contexts and with other reference bases)? What about the realms of politics and professional associations in general?

Moreover, what are the various possible scenarios for professional involvement on the part of teachers? Going beyond the types of involvement traditionally noted by sociological analyses (as observed above), the notion of professional involvement certainly merits questioning in this symposium no. 9 (together with symposium no. 1 on problems with “careers” and “teachers’ livelihoods”, emphasizing the importance of investments and/or pedagogical militancy, seen through the lens of relationships with professional associations and pedagogical movements, on one hand, and the lens of how time for private and professional lives is managed, on the other.

Finally, consideration might also be given here, on a broader level, to the notion of critical thinking applied to teachers, with questions about which new critical skills they should develop in order to conceive of education differently.

**S 10 : Teaching conditions in a context of diversity and inequality**

In France, a certain number of reforms implemented since 1936 have tried, with more or less success, to unify the organisation of the education system (Prost, 2013). The transition from a system based on clearly separated training sectors to a more unified organisation has transformed teaching conditions significantly. Used so far to rather homogeneous groups, teachers have suddenly been confronted to deeply heterogeneous school levels and socio-cultural characteristics among pupils. Institutionally speaking, teachers have been encouraged to take such a diversity into account through various strategies (differentiated instruction, individualisation of school careers, etc.). The symposium offers to concentrate on the position teachers have taken faced to this injunction. How is the—so-called republican—conception of a school based on the ideal that the same culture is taught to all
the pupils meet the challenge of the growing heterogeneity of school groups? How are teaching conditions, when inspired from a political democratic perspective, influenced by the problem of reconciling a demanding school and a fair school? Which role are these much disturbed teaching conditions likely to play in the boom of school democratisation or on the contrary in the process of creating inequalities through the school system.

The responsibility that lies with teachers is however limited. On this respect teaching conditions should be studied in the general context of a powerful segregation movement (Merle, 2012). The discriminating effects of relaxing the school map (Merle, 2010), the disparities linked to the unequal transmission of knowledge associated to the social composition of schools (Baluteau, 2013), the discriminating practices of some school administrations (Laforgue, 2004), all these elements—the list of which is far from being complete—reveal the obstacles that have developed to avoid facing diversity.

Such an observation seems to contravene the public policies that have been implemented in the field of the so-called inclusive education since the law passed in September 2005 (Gardou, 2012). Almost ten years after the adoption of that law, the ministry has been trying to improve its own information sytems (Le Laidier, 2012) by taking into account the groups of pupils with special educational needs while insisting on the progress made as regards the access to mainstreaming school attendance. Now, the diversity of these pupils which is linked to different aetiologies tends to include characteristics which concern not only aetiologies but also other factors the prevalence of which seems to be more and more highlighted (dys). The effect of the individualisation and the externalisation of teaching (mixed with reeducation and therapeutic approaches) is today seen as a wayward trend (Meirieu, 2013) so that, even though it respects the principle of diversity, the school system would today tend to get rid of prerogatives that would be yet part of it in principle. The symposium will also focus on the principle and the practice of early detection as well as on the individualisation and the externalisation of education and reeducation practices.